

Dear Members of the Metro Council,

We want to thank Metro Staff and Councilors for their ongoing work as a partner in the Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) Program. Metro's diligence pushing to get answers to hard questions is helping the community get a clearer vision for this project and the potential impacts that may arise from it, particularly around climate change and racial equity.

We write to you as concerned community groups who have been tracking the IBR Project and have serious concerns about the process so far and the proposal as a whole. It is our hope that, as leaders charged with ensuring an equitable, climate-smart solution to the I-5 corridor's mobility challenges through the Portland metro, you will leverage your positions to address our concerns with the current direction and scope of the IBR.

In early November 2021, many of the signed groups below sent you a letter requesting that the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) amendment for the IBR be paused until questions from Portland Bureau of Transportation Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty and Metro Council President Lynn Peterson¹ on the need for transportation demand management (TDM) design options, transit analysis, and screening criteria, so the community can effectively assess replacement options.²

In the time since the letter was first sent from Commissioner Hardesty and President Peterson, and since community groups first raised concerns over this MTIP amendment, IBR leadership has not responded in a way that gives us confidence that passing the MTIP funding for Preliminary Engineering (PE) Assessments will address the fundamental concerns that elected officials and community groups have. These concerns include an insufficient commitment to centering climate change and racial equity in this project's purpose and needs statement. We believe that this PE funding will not be used to study all viable options, many of which would be cheaper, and more climate-friendly than the range of design elements currently being reviewed.

We, therefore, ask Metro to:

- 1. Table the vote of the MTIP Amendment and Metro's IBR Values, Outcomes, and Actions until Metro hosts a Town Hall Interstate Bridge Replacement Project that can be held on the MTIP Amendment, and the Council's Values, Outcomes, and Actions Resolution**
- 2. Table the vote of MTIP Amendment and the Council's Values, Outcomes, and Actions Resolution until the Metro Council District 6 vacancy has been filled, seated, and sworn in.**

¹ President Peterson and Commissioner Hardesty's joint letter, sent October 21st 2021, is available here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xIdalvXd9vWNfqlSOqZYdpsL9w6hulFy/view?usp=sharing>

² This letter from advocates, sent November 8 2021, is available here:

https://bikeportland.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Interstate-Bridge-Replacement-Open-Sign-on-Letter-11.8.21.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3mXUzepIGS2ZGVUUtb2Kyi0ALTR9zFygPeQt5i_Uv6WLuPuFo8mEG_zjVU

We first ask Metro to hold a Town Hall so that community members, community groups, and other stakeholders have the opportunity to provide public comments on our common values. Community asks for the following in a virtual town hall:

- *Community members are allowed 3 minutes to testify with a camera feed, and testifiers have the opportunity to present slides and other information.*
- *Other stakeholders, including but not limited to elected and appointed officials from ODOT, TriMet, The City of Portland, and others are invited by Metro to attend and hear testimony*
- *The event must be recorded and transcribed, and key themes should be reported back out to stakeholders.*

Second, with Councilor Bob Stacey's retirement from Council, Council District Seat 6 remains unfilled at this time. Considering there are several candidates, ensuring that residents of District 6 feel heard, and are represented at Metro is critical. A vote allocating \$36 million dollars on the way to a several billion-dollar project should not be taken without full representation. Therefore, we ask that before any future votes on the IBR program, Metro should fill the vacancy, seated and sworn, to ensure full democratic participation and efficacy.

Lastly, we again want to reiterate that IBR project leadership continues to falsely claim that accessing federal funds necessitates moving the project forward quickly, and therefore relies on using old documentation and analysis. Not only is this false, and project staff need to stop repeating it as justification to move forward with the project, but it will bind this project to the failures of the Columbia River Crossing (CRC). So long as a jurisdiction picks a no-build option, no federal funds have to be repaid, which has happened in multiple other instances across the state.³ In addition, new federal monies from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 are also beginning to flow down to state departments of transportation. While there is funding for the IBR project in the IJJA, ensuring that we spend these funds correctly is far more important than moving quickly.

Again, thank you for your work to advance equitable, climate-smart solutions to the I-5 corridor's mobility challenges. We understand the value in replacing this bridge and want to support the right option for our region, its people, and its future. We strongly believe assuring our core values and concerns are addressed will make the project stronger, as well as by addressing the concerns raised by Metro and the City of Portland. This project represents the single largest infrastructure project in our region's history: it is imperative we get this right and invest in a project in line with our region's values.

We pledge to join elected officials in supporting an Interstate Bridge Replacement that meets these basic metrics for climate, transportation, and racial justice - and to push our elected officials to hold the project until these basic standards are met.

³"No deposit, no return: Another lie to sell the Columbia River Crossing" *City Observatory*. Nov 18, 2019. <https://cityobservatory.org/no-deposit-no-return-another-lie-to-sell-the-columbia-river-crossing/>

Signed,

Brett Morgan
1000 Friends of Oregon

Ashton D. Simpson
Oregon Walks

Sarah Iannarone
The Street Trust

Chris Smith
No More Freeways

Huy Ong
OPAL Environmental Justice

Kari Schlosshauer
NW Safe Routes to School Partnership

Paxton Rothwell
Sunrise PDX

Douglas R. Allen
AORTA Director

Nuhamin Eiden
Unite Oregon

Momoko Saunders
Community Cycling Center

CC:

The Oregon / Washington Legislative Bi-State Bridge Committee Leadership
Oregon Governor Kate Brown
Washington Governor Jay Inslee
Interstate Bridge Program Manager Greg Johnson
Brendan Finn, ODOT Urban Mobility Office
Metro Council President Lynn Peterson
PBOT Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty